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ABSTRACT

The activities suggested here are intended to encourage the participation of teachers and students of foreign languages in celebrating the Bicentennial. These brief suggestions are grouped under the following headings: (1) community-school involvement for teachers and students; (2) research possibilities for students; (3) extracurricular community-oriented activities for students and teachers; (4) special community-school project: sound and light spectacle; (5) interdisciplinary projects to be offered to all students; (6) classroom strategies (map work, industrial growth, role-playing, famous personalities/places games); (7) topics for classroom discussion (origins; politics--1776; language; customs and traditions; foods, services, commerce, trade; education; Indians; toys and games; arts; politics--constitution; foreign friends of liberty), (8) cross-cultural impact (European, American, field trips); (9) cross-cultural questionnaires, and (10) values clarification techniques. (RM)

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Foreign Languages and the Bicentennial

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New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers

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FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND THE BICENTENNIAL

The activities described herein are intended to encourage the participation of teachers and students of foreign languages in the celebration of the American Bicentennial and to aid in presenting ideas that can give the foreign language curriculum a new and dynamic dimension.

We all know the difficulties of teaching a language and culture to students who may be able to experience them only vicariously. The coming celebration of America's 200th birthday provides us with a unique opportunity to investigate languages and cultures as they were then and are today, thereby providing the occasion for a deeper understanding and appreciation of the diversity of our mutual heritage and its constantly evolving, vibrant spirit in our country today. The strength and vitality of this nation lie in its cultural pluralism represented by the contributions of the varied ethnic groups already firmly established, as well as by the continuing wave of immigration into America.

What occurs under the aegis of the Bicentennial should go far beyond a national birthday party in 1976. Rather, we should consider this a celebration of a bicentennial era, a period of researching our past, examining our present and planning for the next 100 years of national life.

The activities can be conducted in the target language or in English depending on the fluency of the students and the audience for whom the various projects are developed. They represent only a beginning which will allow teachers and students to add their own imagination, creativity and knowledge, thus involving all in a germane program concentrating on the local, interdisciplinary emphasis desired during this special time.

COMMUNITY-SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

- Formation of and membership in the Bicentennial Club or Committee in your school or school district
- Contact with and membership in the local historical society and Bicentennial Commission/Committee
- Planning of student-teacher cooperation with local service organizations, e.g., Chamber of Commerce, League of Women Voters, Rotary, Lions, and with hyphenated American groups
- Contributions to the regular publication of a Bicentennial newsletter or flyer for the community newsletter from the school district
- Writing of articles for the local newspapers on foreign language bicentennial activities

RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES FOR STUDENTS

- Assist historical societies and museums with the translation of documents — diaries, journals, letters, novels, poetry-written over the centuries by members of immigrant groups in foreign languages.
- Investigate church and town hall records for evidence of when immigrants arrived, in what numbers, where they lived, what property they owned, how many were born, baptized, married, died, what religion they practiced.
- Trace early immigrant families in the immediate area to the present day, and interview present family members for more information.
- Investigate school records from earliest times available to the present, and determine how immigrants were taught English, what foreign languages were taught to students, and if possible, how these languages were taught (through old textbooks).
- Have individuals or small groups of students research their own heritage groups and then share their family tree, history, customs, special foods and feasts with each other.

- Create a large display perhaps in time line format, showing pictorially highlights of the ethnic contribution to your community and region for exhibition in the town hall, schools, community centers and shopping malls.
- Trace the route(s) taken by the target language immigrants; write a log beginning with their port(s) of embarkation to their final settlement(s) in America. Discuss through direct questions the reasons for their immigration and for their first settlements, their contributions and their visible presence in the United States today.
- Research the present immigration to the United States to determine what groups are arriving, how, why, where they are settling at first, their later migration, their contributions to wherever they are, how they are learning English and other languages.
- Research the potential future immigration to the United States and project the numbers of people and the areas from which they are likely to come as well as their reasons for coming and their potential influence on American society.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR, COMMUNITY ORIENTED ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

- *Sister City:* set up communication (letters, tapes, realia) with towns in the area from where many original settlers of your community came. Invite the foreign mayors, city officials, students to visit your community, and set up future exchange visits of students to that area.
- Translate Chamber of Commerce materials, guidebooks, brochures in several languages for potential visitors.
- Offer to record guided tours to your area in several languages and/or provide live guides for foreign tourists. This service is particularly important where major sites of the American Revolution exist.
- Begin training students in the languages needed to work in Lake Placid for the 1980 Olympics (within the Bicentennial Era) as hosts, guides, service personnel, etc.
- Develop courses in languages and especially on the cultures which will be represented at the 1980 Olympics for adults as well as students throughout New York State.
- Arrange home stays or short visits for coffee and conversation for foreign tourists who come to your area.
- Sponsor Grandmothers' Evening when recent or past immigrant family members share a national dish and some of their experiences in coming to America with the students who attend. Tape interviews with older foreign born citizens.
- Submit student written articles or recipes to the local newspapers that deal with the target language culture on a regular basis.
- Organize a poster contest with the ethnic heritage of America, the State or your local area as a theme. Encourage the use of phrases and words that have been assimilated into the English language.
- Encourage student participation in local Bicentennial activities such as parades where floats on the ethnic heritage with students in native costumes would be appropriate.
- Invite local residents from the target language countries to speak to the class of their expectations, realizations, problems and disappointments upon their arrival in the United States. A valuable lesson in human relations can be obtained from listening to their transitional problems: What did they miss from their native countries? What communication problems did they experience? How were they received here?
- Establish an ethnic language study program. Survey students in the school district to determine what other languages they would like to have offered. The native informants in this independent study program are local residents who assist students on a regular basis. Several New York State universities and high schools are offering Modern Greek, Polish, Gaelic, Norwegian, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese among other languages in such a program.

SPECIAL COMMUNITY-SCHOOL PROJECT: SOUND AND LIGHT SPECTACLE

With the emphasis on media in education today, this interdisciplinary program can be a source of interest for any student.

- Students obtain slides of a region settled by the target language immigrants including famous landmarks, restored homes and villages and background pictures (cooperation with Art Department).
- Students research the historical background, noting events, names and dates, and prepare a script narrating this colonization as simply as possible in the target language and/or in English (cooperation with Social Studies and English Departments).
- A class script is written together and recorded before the live presentation (cooperation with English Department).
- Slides and script are then synchronized (cooperation with Audio-Visual Department).
- Appropriate music is added to the recorded script (cooperation with Music Department).
- Color gels can be used to suggest moods and events: red-turmoil; blue-serenity, etc. (cooperation with Audio-Visual and Art Departments).
- A multi-media program using two or three slide projectors enhances the dramatic aspects of such a presentation (cooperation with Audio-Visual Department). The program can then be presented to the class, school or to the public.

It can be developed in the community with the class preparing a sound and light show of a local historical landmark and presenting it to the community either in English or the target language or both.

INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECTS: TO BE OFFERED TO ALL STUDENTS

- Develop mini- and semester courses in cooperation with other departments on:

  (a) local, New York State and/or American history emphasizing the impact of the foreign born immigrants on American society over the centuries;
  (b) foreign influences in architecture, dance and athletics. Show the unique American aspects based on the foreign examples in each area. Exhibit in prominent public places realia, photographs, a time line, maps to show these influences;
  (c) foreign mathematicians and scientists who accomplished great feats in their disciplines and finally the further American development and refinement in those areas.

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

Map work

- Using a wall map of the United States and/or New York State, have students point out names of towns with names of foreign origin or of foreign persons. Have students research one or two towns as to how they received their names.
- Draw a map of the United States or New York State with sections colored in for the colonization patterns of immigrants of various nations.
- Using two maps, one of the United States/New York and one of the target language countries, play the following game: divide students into two teams. Team A sends a member to the American map; Team B a member to the foreign map. Teacher announces the name of a "twin" city, and the first team to find it on its map wins a point. Teams may exchange maps each time, if desired.
- Have students trace the routes of the men who first explored this country and discuss what brought each one to this continent.

INDUSTRIAL GROWTH

- Have students compile lists of craft brought by the settlers to the New World and discuss their importance in the industrial growth of America.
- Have students compile lists of products indigenous to America which were sent to Europe and vice versa, and discuss their impact on the mutual economies.
- Have students research the European inventions brought here, their further development and general impact on industrialization in America.
- Have students research the European inventors, scientists, economists who immigrated and their importance to this country's development up to today.

ROLE-PLAYING

- Have students role-play the immigrants to this country, developing every facet of their lives in the New World: how they arrived here, their expectations, the realities of life, their political status, their religious beliefs, their customs, their language and so on. Students can do the initial research for this strategy, develop stimuli, provide props, dialogs and settings. This is an excellent opportunity for oral practice in the target language, and the teacher can ask the students to use certain structures and vocabulary in their presentations.

FAMOUS PERSONALITIES/PLACES GAMES

- *Who was I?* A student prepares a demonstration of one significant contribution of a foreign personality or place and presents it to the class for them to guess the correct name.
- *Jeopardy:* A brief statement or question is given by a student to describe an answer stimulus.

Example: *Stimulus* – Marietta
Answer – A city in Ohio named in honor of Marie Antoinette.

TOPICS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Except for the native American Indian, settlers in New York State and other areas of the colonies came from other countries. An interdisciplinary approach would be to explore the contributions of various nationalities and races to society in 1776 and the present using the questions technique suggested below.

ORIGINS

- What peoples lived in the area, NYS at time of Revolutionary War? From what strata of society were the early settlers? Is there any particular area that nationalities settled? Why? When did other nationalities migrate to the area, state?

POLITICS – 1776

- How did various nationalities and races react to the Revolutionary War? Principles? Attitudes? What numbers actually participated?

LANGUAGE

- What was the prevalent language in 1776? How did various nationalities communicate? What words from other languages were incorporated into Americanized English? Names or places – from what languages?

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

- What customs and traditions did early settlers bring to colonies – i.e., festivals, holidays, clothes, songs, cooking, etc.? How did hard life in colonies and association with differing traditions modify customs and traditions? What ones have been incorporated into American life today?

FOODS, SERVICES, COMMERCE, TRADE

- What utilities, goods, etc., were the various nationalities accustomed to that resulted in the development of business in U.S.A.? What new businesses developed out of a need to facilitate life in colonies? What technological advances occurred in the process? Were various nationalities involved in particular areas of business? Why?

EDUCATION

- Were there variances in the educational philosophy of different nationalities? If so, how did they contribute to the growth of public education? Who was educated during colonial period and Revolutionary War? What kinds of schools developed? By whom?

INDIANS

- What were nationalities' attitude toward the Indians? What relationship and interrelationship developed? Why?

TOYS AND GAMES

- What toys, sports, and games come from various countries? How were they modified based upon available resources and time? Which ones still exist today? In what form?

ARTS – SPECTRUM

- What influence did each nationality have on the development of "American Art"? What art forms existed in the colonies? What was "art", and what was production or essential goods?

POLITICS – CONSTITUTION

- What attitudes toward government and human beings which existed in various national backgrounds contributed to the principles of the Constitution? Where did some of the philosophical concepts originate? Were there any national groups which fought for the Bill of Rights?

FOREIGN FRIEND OF LIBERTY

- How great was the role of foreigners in the American Revolutionary War? Who were LaFayette, Herkimer, von Steuben, Pulaski, etc.? What were their contributions? How are they remembered today?

CROSS-CULTURAL IMPACT

EUROPEAN IMPACT

- Have students prepare points on why the American people have tended to rely heavily on the culture of Europe as the means to become "cultured", e.g., the idea of being "educated" after a trip to Europe, the importance of European wines over domestic ones, the dominance of European styles of architecture.

AMERICAN IMPACT

- Have students prepare points showing the impact of American culture on Europe, e.g., the introduction of McDonald's Hamburgers and Kentucky Fried Chicken in major European cities, the impact of self-service restaurants and frozen meals, the influence of jazz and rock on European music.

Current American and European magazines are excellent resources for further discussion topics on these mutual impact areas.

FIELD TRIPS

- Students research and plan real and/or imaginary field trips of the areas in which the target language immigrants had particular influence. Each student takes a different site or part of a tour and develops an oral description as a guide would for his classmates and the teacher.

CROSS-CULTURAL QUESTIONNAIRES

- Develop with the students a questionnaire that aims at determining the level of acceptance of foreigners, foreign languages, foreign cultures among themselves and their non-foreign language studying peers. Administer and, after the results have been compiled, discuss the feelings of the two groups as represented in these results. Does foreign language and culture study help students accept another way of living more readily than their peers? Why? Or why not?

VALUES CLARIFICATION TECHNIQUES

- Develop learning activities which will emphasize human relations concepts such as the personal interpretation of abstract concepts such as liberty, freedom, democracy, stereotyping of members of other groups or levels of society, the separation of fact from fiction by the critical mind. Excellent examples of these activities can be found in *Human Relations Education. A Guidebook To Learning Activities.* Prepared by Human Relations Project of Western New York and reprinted by the State Education Department, Curriculum Development Center, Albany, New York 12234.